

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Fannin Battleground State Historic Site

Other name/site number: Fannin State Park; Goliad State Park (1913–1931); Archeological site 41GD47

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 734 FM 2506

City or town: Fannin

State: Texas

County: Goliad

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this

☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☒ statewide ☐ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☒ D

Signature of certifying official / Title

State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register☐ determined eligible for the National Register☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.☐ removed from the National Register☐ other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

	Private
	Public - Local
x	Public - State
	Public - Federal

Category of Property

	building(s)
x	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
1	0	sites
4	1	structures
4	1	objects
10	4	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: DEFENSE: battle site
LANDSCAPE: park
RECREATION: monument/marker

Current Functions: LANDSCAPE: park
RECREATION: monument/marker

7. Description

Architectural Classification: NO STYLE

Principal Exterior Materials: METAL/Iron; STONE/granite; CONCRETE, BRICK, WOOD

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7 through 14)

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, D

Criteria Considerations: F (Commemorative Properties)

Areas of Significance: Archeology/Historic Non-Aboriginal; Conservation

Period of Significance: 1836; 1894-1938

Significant Dates: 1836, 1894, 1913

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): Texian; Mexican

Architect/Builder: Landscape architect unknown; Ed Wagner, architect, J.M. Blake, builder, 1928; Sam Vosper, Raiford Stripling, architects, T.E. Stone, builder, 1938

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 15 through 29)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets 30-31)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 13.6 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates, Datum WGS84

1. 28.687096° -97.234132°
2. 28.687581° -97.232218°
3. 28.685840° -97.231630°
4. 28.685327° -97.233597°
5. 28.684915° -97.233741°
6. 28.685042° -97.234756°
7. 28.686337° -97.235085°
8. 28.686529° -97.234190°

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation page xx

Boundary Justification: See continuation page xx

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Kristen Brown, Kevin Miller, Anna Mod, Jim Steely, with National Register Coordinator Gregory Smith and Brett Cruse, THC Archeologist

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Date: December 9, 2015

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 32-35)

Additional items (see continuation sheets 36-40)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 5, and 41-48)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Photographs

Fannin Battleground Historic District

Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Photographed by Kristen Brown (SWCA Environmental Consultants), October 2014

Photo 1.

Ornate cast iron gate, facing west

Photo 2.

Gin screw, facing east/northeast into park

Photo 3.

Circular drive, facing east toward flagpole and gate

Photo 4.

Western portion of district across FM 2506, facing west

Photo 5.

Western portion of district, facing northwest toward gin screw, gate, caretaker house

Photo 6.

Reservoir, facing southeast

Photo 7.

Picnic pad and restroom building, facing northeast

Photo 8.

Park with walkway/obelisk/structures beyond, facing northeast

Photo 9.

Obelisk, facing west

Photo 10.

Reservoir/bandstand/pavilion/circular drive, facing west/northwest

Photo 11.

Pavilion and bandstand, facing north

Photo 12.

Bandstand, facing southeast

Photo 13.

Pavilion and bandstand, facing east/northeast

Photo 14.

Caretaker House, camera facing northwest

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Description

The Fannin Battleground State Historic Site is a 13.6-acre state-owned commemorative park honoring the 1836 Battle of Coleto Creek fought during the Texas war for independence from Mexico. The battle was fought on March 19 and 20, between forces commanded by Texian Col. James W. Fannin and Mexican Gen. Jose de Urrea. Previous studies have shown that the park parcel contains large portions of the battle location itself, including the area believed to be where Colonel James W. Fannin and his Texian Army troops dug in and attempted to defend their position. The battle site was made a state park in 1913 and commemorated in the 1920s and 1930s with various monuments and visitor facilities. The 13.6-acre historic district is also a recorded archeological site, designated as 41GD47, where ammunition and other artifacts from the battle have been recovered. The district contains nine contributing resources, including the formal landscape design, a 1916 granite monument, a 1928 bandstand, and a 1938 picnic pavilion. Today, the Fannin Battleground site is managed and operated by the Texas Historical Commission (THC).

Location and Site Description

The Fannin Battleground Historic District is located 0.7 mile south of Fannin, Texas, in eastern Goliad County (Maps 2 and 3). The district is discontinuous, with two parcels of land totaling 13.6 acres located on either side of Farm-to-Market Road (FM) 2506. The eastern portion, located on the east side of FM 2506, is 10 acres in area and is roughly square in shape. It is a commemorative park and contains monuments and public facilities, surrounded by a low chain link fence. Within the park is Park Road 27, a circular road with a diameter of approximately 420 feet. In the center is the 1916 granite monument. The circle is bisected by two concrete walkways which cross in an "X" at the monument's location. The circular road is accessed by a short driveway off of FM 2506 that passes underneath a non-historic entry gate. Near the gate and drive is another monument—a large, iron, cotton gin screw inset into the ground that supposedly marks the location of the Texian entrenchment. A third resource is located near the southeast corner of the park, just outside the circular drive; it consists of a flagpole, gate, and concrete markers. In the northeast corner of the park, outside the circular drive, are park facilities including the 1928 bandstand, the 1938 pavilion, a historic water reservoir, a non-historic concrete picnic pad with awning, and a non-historic restroom building. The remainder of the district, across FM 2506, is an open field with a circa 1920s bungalow and a metal equipment garage near its northern border.

The district is primarily comprised of flat, open, level parkland. Grass covers most of the ground, with ornamental bushes lining the circular road and trees surrounding the buildings in the developed areas, a historic-period change from historic accounts that describe the battlefield landscape as open prairie with tall grasses. These battlefield landscape alterations are consistent with its century of use as a commemorative park, and are apparently little altered since their formal development in the 1920s and 1930s.

Archeological investigations in 2001 and 2011 identified the park as the likely center of the Battle of Coleto Creek. The distribution of lead ammunition balls recovered during the two archeological investigations provide strong evidence suggesting the Texian ammunition supply and likely center of the Texian defense is close to the location of the gin screw placed in the park in 1894.¹ Park development and opportunistic artifact collecting over many decades have diminished the archeological integrity of portions of the district; however, recent subsurface investigations recovered numerous battle-related artifacts despite claims that recreational metal detecting had stripped the park of battle-related materials.² Based on the recovery from several investigations, it is highly likely that more battle-related artifacts are extant in the park.

¹ Black 2004; Galindo and Miller 2011.

² Ibid.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Extant Historic Resources

The property contains nine historic resources: four objects (gin screw, obelisk, gate, flagpole with surrounding markers); and four structures (bandstand, picnic pavilion, reservoir, and circulation network), and one building (caretaker's house). See Map 4.

Gin Screw

The gin screw is a large threaded screw from a cotton gin that was installed as a battle site marker in 1894 by Sol Parks, a local landowner. The iron screw was originally used to compress bales of cotton. The screw is rusty and has a large nut at its top. As installed, it extends approximately eight feet above the ground. Although a historic photo shows the screw installed vertically (Figure 1), today it has a lean of approximately ten degrees. On the ground surrounding the screw is a five-pointed Texas star created with pea gravel in a concrete border. This spot-landscaping is not from the period of significance. A carved granite marker placed in 1916 near the screw reads, "THIS GIN HORSE POWER SCREW PLATE WAS PLACED HERE BY SOL PARKS IN THE YEAR 1894."³

Granite Obelisk

The granite obelisk in the center of the park was installed in 1916. It is 29 feet in height and is set on a raised circular bed. It is unknown who designed the obelisk. The obelisk is widest at its base and has several distinct decorative features that are progressively narrower as they go up. First is a short rusticated base, which is topped by smooth cavetto and ovolo moldings. Atop that is a tall rectangular shaft or die that contains the monument's commemorative information. A darker, contrasting inset granite panel in this section is carved with the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF
JAMES W. FANNIN, JR.
AND FELLOW PATRIOTS
WHOSE SURRENDER HERE ON
HONORABLE TERMS ON
MAR. 20, 1836, INVOLVED THE
SACRIFICE OF THEIR LIVES AT
LA BAHIA

VICTIMS OF TREACHERY'S BRUTAL STROKE
THEY DIED TO BREAK THE TYRANT'S YOKE

"ON FAME'S ETERNAL CAMPING GROUND,
THEIR SILENT TENTS ARE SPREAD,
AND GLORY GUARDS WITH HALLOWED ROUND
THE BIVOUAC OF THESE DEAD."

Two of the other faces of the block have carved flags, and the fourth has a carved cannon and artilleryman. The rectangular block has a molded frieze around its top and a decorative parapet-like cap with semicircular arches, one in each elevation. Each corner of the block is topped with a ball finial. The semicircular arches are reminiscent of the post-1836 curvilinear roofline of the Alamo. These are carved with Texas stars and wreaths. Above this pediment feature is a

³ Sol Parks was a landowner who sought to commemorate the battle. Legend says that a survivor of the battle, William L. Hunter, placed a pile of rocks at the location where Fannin's troops fought, and that Parks substituted the screw for the rocks.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

simple square block that serves as transition to the obelisk form above. The obelisk itself is four-sided and smooth. It tapers gently as it rises and is capped by a pyramidal top. At the base of the obelisk, on one face only, is a relief carving of crossed swords. The obelisk was repaired after damage in a 1929 hurricane—and perhaps some of the inscription was added—through a special appropriation of \$4,000 from a special Legislative session.⁴

Gate and Flagpole with surrounding Markers

In the park's southeast corner is an assemblage of items including a decorative gate with access via a short concrete walkway to a flagpole set in a circular concrete pad with perimeter commemorative carved granite markers. The ornate cast iron gate is located at the place where the walkway and the park's circular drive intersect and was installed to commemorate the land donation that established the park.⁵ It is inscribed, "Grounds Donated by H.B. Hanley 1914." The gate was originally at the State Capitol grounds in Austin, and was incorporated into the park fence following reconfiguration of that Austin landscape. It has numerous cast iron stars and fleurs-de-lis attached to its vertical framing members. Nine granite markers are set into the perimeter of the concrete pad that surrounds the flagpole. Each is a flat rectangle with carved names and text on its surface; the nine names, from left to right, are: J.G. Swickheimer, Park Commissioner; Lizzie J. Hanley; Leopold Morris; James S. Hogg; James Heath Ewell, World War Veteran; Governor Dan Moody; Sol Parks; Nellie B. Kreisle; and Senator J.H. Bailey. All were placed in the late 1920s.

Bandstand

The bandstand was built in 1928 and was restored in 2012. Ed Wagner of Victoria drew the building plans and J.M. Blake of Goliad built it.⁶ It has excellent integrity and, based on a photograph from its dedication ceremony, appears much as it did when constructed (Figure 2). The bandstand is an octagonal two-story structure, approximately 30 feet in diameter, with a solid wall enclosing the lower floor and an open deck above. At each of the eight corners are thick concrete piers that extend the entire height of the structure. Between each of the piers on the lower floor are red brick walls containing 1/1 windows. The walls on the eastern side of the structure have pairs of windows, whereas the walls on the western side have single windows. On the structure's southwest side is a long concrete staircase that ascends to the upper bandstand level. The staircase is not historic but has the same configuration as the original, with concrete steps and metal stair rails. Next to this, on the bandstand's south wall, is a paneled double entry door that leads into an interior first-floor space. The octagonal room inside is host to interpretive panels and objects that help commemorate the site. On the second floor of the bandstand, railings span the space between the structural piers, but the space is otherwise open. As on the staircase, the railings are not historic but are similar in configuration to the bandstand's original railings. The roof echoes the octagonal shape, with eight wedge-shaped roof planes ascending to a central point. The painted rafters are exposed on the underside of the roof, and the rafter ends are flush with the overhanging roof edge. Atop the roof is a short flagpole.

Picnic Pavilion

The picnic pavilion was built in 1938 and restored in 2012. The building was originally designed by the architectural firm of Vosper and Stripling, based at the time in Goliad, and built by T.E. Stone of Victoria. It has not been altered since its construction (Figure 3). The pavilion is designed to resemble a Greek temple, with columns and a flat roof creating an open covered space to shelter picnics and other activities. Its footprint measures approximately 50×20 feet. At each corner of the structure is a short section of cornered wall with four flat, fluted pilasters, two on each elevation. The north and south sides of the structure are the long elevations. Each is an open colonnade with four square columns evenly spaced along the building edge between the corners. Each column has a fluted, flat pilaster on its exterior. The short east and west

⁴ *House Journal* [of the Texas Legislature], Third Called Session, 1929. Pgs. 218–219.

⁵ Taylor Studios Inc. *Fannin Battleground State Historic Site Interpretive Plan*. Rantoul, IL: 2009.

⁶ Black 2008:56

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

elevations are walled. The west elevation has a broad window opening that contains lattice-like openwork. The east elevation has a single door opening that leads directly to the bandstand staircase. Atop the building's many pilasters sits an entablature with a narrow architrave, a frieze with triglyphs, and a slightly overhanging cornice.

Reservoir

The reservoir is all that remains of a windmill, elevated water tank, and reservoir that were installed in 1928 to provide irrigation for the park's landscaping. The reservoir is visible as a raised earthen hill southeast of the bandstand in the park's northeast corner. Historically the reservoir was open and was often used by local children as a swimming hole. Today the reservoir is capped with a thick concrete lid. The cap measures approximately 50 feet in diameter, and the entire earthen hill surrounding it has a diameter of approximately 100 feet.

Circulation Network

The park's circulation network was designed in 1916 as a circle intended to draw attention to the granite obelisk at its center. The X-shaped concrete pathways leading to the obelisk were also part of the original 1916 plan. The park road measures approximately 20 feet across and has a single driving lane plus room for parallel parking along its perimeter. The concrete walkways inside the circle are approximately three feet wide. The pathways leading to the bandstand, pavilion, and gate/flagpole with marker area are believed to be in the same location as they were historically. The pathways leading to the gin screw and restroom building are not historic.

Caretaker's Residence

The c.1920 Caretaker's Residence is a one-story, hipped roof, 3 x 3 bay, early twentieth century Craftsman Style house with a full width porch. The symmetrical, three bay front façade is defined by four, equally spaced, square wooden columns with Doric capitals and a single, central gabled dormer on the roof. The porch balustrade has simple, vertical wood balusters. The main façade is composed of replacement paired 4/4 sash windows flanking a central wooden front door. The house is clad with wooden teardrop siding, typical of its early twentieth century construction date. The three bay rear elevation is composed of a pair of smaller 4/4 windows, a five paneled door, and a sliding type window with divided lights; the door and sliding window are surrounded with vertical T-111 board siding indicating the infill of a former rear porch. All of the windows on the house are replacements.

Noncontributing Resources

The district contains five noncontributing resources: one object (picnic pad with awning); one structure (entrance gate); and two buildings (restroom building, and equipment garage). See Map 4.

Restroom Building

The non-historic restroom building was built in 2012 in the park's northeastern corner. It is a rectangular, flat-roofed building with a footprint measuring approximately 50x10 feet. A non-historic walkway leads to, and surrounds, the building. The building has a central inset entry porch that provides access to two doors leading in to two restrooms, one at either end of the building. The building's frame walls have limestone veneer wainscoting on the exterior. Several awning-style clerestory windows are located around the building.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Picnic Pad with Awning

The picnic pad, constructed c. 2005, is located north of the bandstand at the park's northern boundary. It is a small concrete pad with a metal post at each corner and is categorized as an object. The posts support a canvas awning. Two picnic tables are situated under the awning, and near the pad is a large metal grill/smoker.

Entrance Gate

The non-historic entrance gate was installed in 2012 and is categorized as a structure. It consists of two limestone piers, one on either side of the short entrance drive. Above the piers, stretches an arched metal sign that reads, "FANNIN BATTLEGROUND." To either side of the piers is a short section of limestone wall. The piers and wall are made from rusticated rectangular blocks and have smooth limestone caps. Notably, the gate and its short sections of wall were designed to echo the appearance of the historic rock wall that once encircled the park.

Equipment Garage

The equipment garage is located behind the caretaker's residence in the district's northwest corner. It is a non-historic metal garage building that measures approximately 65×25 feet and was constructed in 2011. It has a metal front-gabled roof and a garage door opening on its east elevation.

Historic and Non-Historic Inventory Table

Name	Type	Date	Contributing Status
Gin Screw	Object	1894	C
Obelisk	Object	1916	C
Gate	Object	1914	C
Flagpole with set markers	Object	1920s	C
Bandstand	Structure	1928	C
Picnic Pavilion	Structure	1938	C
Reservoir	Structure	1928	C
Circulation Network	Structure	1916	C
Caretaker's Residence	Building	c. 1920	C
Overall site (archeological; landscape)	Site	1836; 1894-1938	C
Restroom Building	Building	2012	NC
Picnic Pad with Awning	Object	c. 2005	NC
Entrance Gate	Structure	2012	NC
Equipment Garage	Building	2011	NC

Previous Archeological Investigations and Archeological Resources

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site is recorded as site 41GD47 across the entire 13.6 acres. The site form was completed in 1983 by Juliann Pool of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), without an association to an archeological project, but in anticipation of possible park development. The only feature noted is the granite obelisk monument erected at the assumed battle site. Interestingly, the site form notes that the park contains part of the original

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

battleground, despite TPWD staff historically maintaining that the park was merely a commemorative site.⁷ In short, since its creation and development over time, many individuals and agencies believed the site represented a general locale for the battle, but perhaps not the actual site itself. Three significant surveys, conducted in 2001, 2011, and 2014 found numerous artifacts to indicate that the park was indeed the location of the battle (Figure 5 and Figure 6).

In 2001, in order to determine if the battle did indeed take place at the site, a survey was done in two phases. First, a metal detector survey was conducted by Art Black for TPWD over three weekends in April and May 2001. Goals included identifying the location of the Texian Square, where the Texian forces made their stand, determining whether this position and the earthworks were in the same location, and identifying the location of possible Mexican army positions.⁸ Following this, a magnetometer survey was conducted of a 50×70-m area identified during the metal detector survey as the possible location of the Texian forces.⁹ The primary goal of the magnetometer survey was to locate possible earthworks dug by the Texian forces as defensive works used during the battle and that may have been used for the disposal of casualties following the battle.

Roughly 300 artifacts were recovered during the initial metal detector survey, most of which were items likely related to the Battle of Coleto Creek. The majority of the artifacts were encountered at a depth of 10–12 inches and consisted of lead balls used as ammunition during the battle (N=261). The majority of these were larger musket balls, most of which were identified as belonging to the Texas forces based on the projected caliber. The remaining lead balls were smaller shot presumed to be fired from pistols.¹⁰ Additional armament items included a cannon ball, several canister shot, a side plate to a muzzle-loading pistol, and a ramrod pipe from a Brown Bess musket associated with the Mexican Army.¹¹ Other items include three pieces from cast iron vessels and a possible Mexican military button.

The area with the largest concentration of artifacts was presumed to be either the center of the Texans' position or the location of the ammunition wagon. This area is close to the gin screw marker, near the present-day entrance to the park. It was postulated that the lead balls were dropped rather than fired, thus indicating the location of the Texans rather than their target. Lead balls may have been dropped by the soldiers during the heat of battle, or while unloading ammunition from wagons. Historical commentary also noted that one of the Texian ammunition wagons exploded, which likely also dispersed the balls and other munitions in the Texian square.¹² Two small clusters of larger musket ball ammunition encountered on the west side of FM 2506 may be possible locations of Mexican positions. This concentration of artifacts led Black to conclude that the Fannin Battleground State Historic Site does indeed likely contain a substantial portion of the location of the Texian Square and does not simply serve as a commemorative site.

The magnetometer survey did not identify any possible trench locations or metal objects associated with possible buried bodies. One anomaly was indicated and thought to be a possible burial pit. Hand excavation of a test pit encountered roughly 1 m of fill over the anomaly, so a trench was excavated along one edge to 15 cm above the feature. A 50×50-cm unit within the trench uncovered a large concrete slab, which was a piece of the original park fence buried in the 1960s.¹³ The survey also found no indication that the site contains human remains.¹⁴ This suggested that battle casualties were buried elsewhere, either nearby or in Goliad.¹⁵ As a result of the negative entrenchment results, a history of the development and maintenance of the park was undertaken in order to document whether trenches or other remains of the

⁷ Atlas, Site Form 41GD47; Black 2004: 8.

⁸ Black 2004, 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Black 2004, 29.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

battle had been noted in the past.¹⁶ The research concluded that all earthworks that were present had likely been destroyed during years of park development.

In 2011, SWCA Environmental Consultants conducted an archeological survey with metal detecting of 5.92 acres of the Fannin Battleground State Historic Site. In compliance with the Texas Antiquities Code, the work was conducted to determine whether proposed improvements would affect significant cultural resources located in the park. Archeological work focused on the least-developed areas of the site with a goal of recovering battle-related artifacts in the majority of the park east of FM 2506.¹⁷

The intensive metal detector survey resulted in the recovery of numerous battle-related artifacts from the park east of FM 2506. SWCA recovered more than 150 lead ammunition balls and two iron canister shot of various calibers.¹⁸ Other possibly battle-related artifacts collected include five sets of iron chain with connected links varying in number from four to eight, 19 fragments of an iron barrel hoop, 17 fragments that may be from one or more iron pots, three buckles of varying sizes, a copper or brass button dating from 1812–1830, two possible button fragments, a hinge, a copper peg, and nine unidentified pieces of lead.¹⁹

The depth of the lead ammunition balls from the SWCA survey ranged from 2–16 inches, with 44 percent being recovered from 2–9 inches, and 56 percent from 10 inches or greater. It should be noted that these percentages would be much more skewed to shallower depths if a cluster of 65 lead balls (probably the remains of an ammunition pouch dropped or ejected from the exploded ammunition wagon) had not been recovered from 10 inches below ground surface. Additionally, abundant metallic trash was encountered, indicating that the park had not been completely swept clean by recreational metal detecting as Black had postulated.²⁰

The distribution of lead ammunition balls recovered during these two archeological investigations provide strong evidence suggesting the Texian ammunition supply and possible center of the Texian defense is close to the location of the gin screw/star placed in the park in the 1890s.²¹ The artifact distribution also showed possible Mexican firing positions west of FM 2506, providing spatial information as to the layout of the battle itself and providing suggestions of future research. Neither investigation located trenches or pits excavated by the Texians as earthworks, nor were human remains found within the park boundaries.

SWCA recommended further archeological investigations west of FM 2506, especially since Black had discovered two clusters of musket balls in that location. Based on the recovery in the eastern portion of the park, SWCA suggested that it is highly likely that many more battle-related artifacts are extant in the western portion of the park, where portions of the Mexican troops were positioned.

In 2014, on behalf of the Texas Historical Commission, William Self Associates, Inc. (WSA), conducted ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and metal detecting survey investigations in a 3-acre tract on the west side of FM 2506 at the site.²² GPR studies located four ambiguous anomalies, one a long, linear feature located parallel to FM 2506 that was explored with a small hand excavation unit. This feature, surmised to potentially be related to Texian defensive positions though the excavation showed modern disturbances, was included in an exclusion area that was not to be disturbed and

¹⁶ Ibid., 40.

¹⁷ Galindo and Miller 2011.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Black 2004:41; Galindo and Miller 2011.

²¹ Black 2004; Galindo and Miller 2011.

²² Karbula et al. 2014.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

preserved for future study. The WSA 2014 metal detecting investigations of the 3-acre tract west of FM 2506 resulted in the investigation of 355 separate pieces of metal (260 modern trash), and the recovery and collection of 95 metal artifacts, both historic-age and modern. Metal detection resulted in the recovery of eight battle-related artifacts, 18 potentially battle-related artifacts, 10 historic-age non-battle-related artifacts, and numerous ambiguous items and pieces of modern trash (n=59). The distribution of the battle-related and possibly battle-related artifacts supported the conclusions of previous metal detection surveys at the site for the location of the Texian Square east of and overlapping FM 2506, and of the westernmost proposed Mexican Army firing position at the west edge of the 3-acre tract.

Integrity of Archeological Resources

When considering the integrity of the Fannin Battleground Historic District, it is necessary to view the two distinct periods of significance and the integrity levels of each. The first period of significance corresponds to the time that the Battle of Coleto Creek took place, March 19 and 20, 1836. This period now corresponds only to the battle's archeological record. The second significant date is 1894 when the Gin Screw was placed at the site and relates to the earliest efforts to establish the commemorative park. In 1913, successful planning commenced for the land to be deeded to the State of Texas to commemorate the battleground and for use as a public park. This period of park development extends until 1938 when the pavilion, the last of the historic resources, was constructed.

Integrity: Archeological Record of the Battle

The park has a long history of development, neglect, and subsequent improvements that have negatively affected the depositional setting of the site and artifacts. The primary prior disturbances at the park include construction and expansion of PR 27 which forms a circular drive around the main monument, various park buildings and structures, sidewalks, extensive buried utilities for water, decades of landscaping, and the construction/maintenance of FM 2506 across the west-central portion of the site. In addition, according to previous research, recreational metal detecting over the decades has removed an untold amount of battle-related artifacts from the site.²³ Despite these disturbances, archeological investigations in 2001, 2011, and 2014 recovered numerous battle-related artifacts proving the recreational metal detecting and park development has not completely destroyed the integrity of the site. These artifacts were predominately found in the upper ten inches of the soils, the general extent of modern metal detectors. Potential for more deeply buried artifacts exist in the park, particularly in less disturbed areas. Overall, the integrity is moderate with artifacts and their distributions showing good spatial integrity related to the battle events, providing avenues of research to further reconstruct the battle and the positions of the combatants.

About two-thirds of the public park is developed, with the dominant features being a circular drive (PR 27) with a granite monument at its center, a picnic pavilion, a two-story gazebo with an exhibit space on the first floor, a modern restroom building, and a water reservoir. A gin screw was installed near the park's entrance in 1894 to mark the battle's location on the western margin of the site adjacent to FM 2506. Subsequently, concrete footings outlining the shape of a star were added around it. The granite monument was installed in 1916 and included the addition of fill in the center of the circle to elevate the obelisk.²⁴ A chain-link metal fence surrounds the park east of FM 2506, which replaced a larger, concrete wall in 1964. Across FM 2506, the construction of the caretaker's house and metal equipment garage presumably disturbed a small section of ground where battle activities may have taken place. The remainder of the 3.6-acre western section, however, is undisturbed save for mowing activities, and 2014 studies found battle-related artifacts in the area.

²³ Black 2004.

²⁴ Copeland 2004.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Integrity: Commemorative Park

The commemorative park, first envisioned in 1913 or 1914 and dedicated in 1916, looks much as it did throughout its history. The initial park plan, which called for a circular drive with walkway spokes to the granite obelisk in its center, remains intact as well as the 1894-placed gin screw and recycled Capitol gate. The water reservoir, added in 1928, is still in place, although capped. The 1928 bandstand and 1938 picnic pavilion were restored in 2012 to their historic appearance and are in excellent condition. The assemblage of the cast iron gate and flagpole with perimeter granite markers remain intact. There are some disturbances; namely, the removal of a 1916 windmill and raised water tank, the construction of the non-historic restroom building and picnic pad, and the new walkway and landscaping at the gin screw's location. A concrete wall that once encircled the park is also gone, removed in the 1960s when its condition had deteriorated to the point of it being dangerous. The new stone entrance gate was designed to reflect the appearance of the original wall. The alterations to the park are minimal, however, and are located at the outside edges of the 10-acre park space. They do little to disturb the historic character of the 1914–1938 period of significance.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Statement of Significance

The Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, in the unincorporated community of Fannin in eastern Goliad County, Texas, commemorates the 1836 Battle of Coleto Creek, a pivotal event in the War for Texas Independence. Following the loss of the Alamo to Mexican forces the previous month, the Battle of Coleto Creek also ended in utter defeat for the Texians from a military point of view, but both losses came to represent the Texian cause and inspired the remaining Texas soldiers to persevere in future battles. After the battle, Col. James W. Fannin surrendered his troops to Mexican General Jose Urrea with the understanding that they would be treated as prisoners of war and ultimately released. Instead, Urrea's superior, Mexican president Gen. Santa Anna, ordered the Texian troops marched to a site near the settlement of Goliad where all but a few hand-picked men were summarily executed by firing squad. Texian soldiers thereafter charged into the final battle of the war at San Jacinto with the rallying cries of "Remember the Alamo!" and "Remember Goliad!"

In the late nineteenth century Goliad survivor William L. Hunter marked the site with a pile of stones.²⁵ In 1894, Solomon Parks, Sr. replaced the rock pile with a large iron screw from a cotton gin. In 1913, Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Hanley of Fannin donated the parcel that included what was then thought to comprise all the land associated with the battleground.²⁶ The following year, the land was transferred to the State of Texas to develop as one of its first state parks. In 1918, Mrs. Louise L. Parks sold 3.62 acres comprising the western portion of the park to the State of Texas, and by 1923 a caretaker's residence was constructed on the parcel. Improvements have been made at the park over the years, notably the erection of a commemorative obelisk in 1916, construction of a bandstand in 1928, and construction of a pavilion in 1938. Formerly administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), the Texas Historical Commission has operated the park as a State Historic Site since 2008. The property is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Conservation, at the state level of significance, and under Criterion D in the area of Archeology, at the state level of significance. The property also meets Criteria Consideration F (Commemorative Properties) as the site of a significant event, the location of archeological deposits associated with that event, and as a state park that reveals much about the manner in which the State of Texas and its citizens commemorated historical events of statewide importance from the late 19th through the mid-20th centuries. The property has two periods of significance: 1836 (the year of the battle), and the period 1894-1938, during which the property was first permanently marked as a commemorative site and subsequently acquired and improved as a state park.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site (formerly "Fannin State Park"), was one of Texas' first state parks, the earliest of which were designated more for their associations with early Texas history than for their scenic beauty. Located about a mile south of U.S. Highway 59 and the former Southern Pacific Railroad at the town of Fannin, Texas, in eastern Goliad County, the site encompasses a significant portion of the battleground at Coleto Creek in which the Mexican army under Gen. Jose de Urrea prevailed over Texian soldiers led by Col. James W. Fannin in one of the best-known battles of the Texas War for Independence. Like the Alamo, which fell to the Mexican army only a few days earlier, the Battle of Coleto Creek (March 19-20, 1836) resulted in failure for the Texians but ultimately inspired other troops to carry on to victory.

Like the community of Fannin, the battleground is named for the young and relatively inexperienced Texas Col. James W. Fannin, who led his troops to defeat against the better trained and better outfitted Mexican Imperial Army under Gen. Jose de Urrea. After a fierce battle lasting two days against superior forces, Fannin surrendered his troops to Urrea with the understanding that they would be treated as prisoners of war and ultimately released. According to Urrea's later accounts, it was Gen. Santa Anna who denied the Texian's plea for amnesty. Instead, he ordered Gen. Urrea to kill all the prisoners,

²⁵ Texas Historical Commission, "Cotton Gin Screw." *Fannin Battleground State Historic Site*. (<http://www.visitfanninbattleground.com/index.aspx?page=475>), accessed March 2, 2015.

²⁶ Roell, C.H. "Fannin Battleground State Historic Site," *Handbook of Texas Online*. (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ghf01>), accessed March 2, 2015.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

except for those who possessed certain skills needed by the Mexican government, such as doctors. Trusting that they were being released, Fannin and his men marched to nearby Goliad where a week later they were divided into three bands and summarily shot by Mexican soldiers. The massacre at Goliad and the fall of the Alamo a few weeks earlier, were used to rally Texian troops in the subsequent Battle of San Jacinto, with soldiers calling out, "*Remember the Alamo!*" and "*Remember Goliad!*" as they charged into battle.²⁷

The Battle of Coleto Creek, 1836

Col. James W. Fannin, Jr., the Battle of Coleto Creek, and the massacre at Goliad, can be understood in the context of Anglo/American settlement in the Mexican territory of Coahuila y Tejas, and the decision to break away from Mexico and establish an independent republic in 1836. In the early years of the nineteenth century, men like Stephen F. Austin, known as *empresarios*, made agreements first with Spain, and then with Mexico, to bring American settlers into the northern reaches of Tejas. Generous land grants were issued to men based on their marital status and other considerations. In turn, settlers were made to abide by Mexican law, adopt the Catholic faith, and renounce slavery.²⁸ Americans poured into the Mexican territory in the 1820s and 1830s; however, they generally did not embrace Mexican law, convert to Catholicism, nor free their slaves. Needless to say, the Americans' disregard of their settlement terms caused great concern among the Mexicans who began to take up arms in preparation of putting down the rebellious colonists.²⁹

Tensions between the settlers—Texians as many called themselves, Anglo, Black, and Hispanic alike—and Republic of Mexico officials erupted in skirmishes and outright battles, such as those fought at Velasco and Anahuac, between 1826 and 1835.³⁰ During this time, colonists held several conventions to draft a constitution and new laws that would give Texas separate statehood and greater rights than those offered by the Mexican government.³¹ Continued opposition by the Texians put the Mexican army on alert, and in October 1835, Gen. Martin Perfecto de Cos and 500 men marched into San Antonio, decrying that he would force the Americans out of Texas.³² The next day, October 9, Texians seized Goliad, which lay on the road from San Antonio and Copano. The battle that ensued at Gonzales is considered to be the first of the War for Texas Independence and Gen. Cos was forced back across the Rio Grande.³³

Early in 1836, Generalissimo and Mexican president Santa Anna led his army back across the Rio Grande swearing to obliterate the Texian rebels and their American compatriots, who he considered to be pirates against his government. As such, captured American insurgents were to be given no quarter, i.e., they would be executed without trial.³⁴ Santa Anna's position was widely circulated in both Mexican and American newspapers but whether his dictate was known among Texians is unclear. The Mexican president and general probably did not care; he crossed the Rio Grande with some 6,000 soldiers at his command, more than enough to crush the Texians.³⁵

With Santa Anna at the head of the formidable Mexican Army then marching north toward important Texian settlements, leaders of the rebellion held a convention at Washington on the Brazos on March 2, 1836, where they officially voted in

²⁷ Barker, Eugene and James W. Pohl. "Texas Revolution," *Handbook of Texas Online*, (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qdt01>), accessed March 03, 2015.

²⁸ De León, Arnoldo, "Mexican Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/npm01>), accessed March 03, 2015. Written 2010.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Barker and Pohl.

³⁵ Ibid.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

favor of Texan independence.³⁶ They also appointed Sam Houston major general of the Texas army and commander of the forces at Gonzales. By that time, Santa Anna had acquired another 2,000 troops between the Rio Grande and San Antonio.³⁷

The Alamo

San Antonio, San Patricio, and La Bahia (Goliad) were principal points in the Texian defense. Goliad and its 500 troops under the command of Fannin were considered most important from a strategic point of view, because of their position on a well-traveled branch of El Camino Real de los Tejas from central Mexico. The Alamo, with only about 150 men whose loyalties were split between William B. Travis and James Bowie, was of lesser importance to Texian military strategists since they did not expect a Mexican punitive army to attack San Antonio first, or to have a crippling effect on the majority of settlements closer to the Gulf Coast.³⁸ Santa Anna chose to make his first assault at San Antonio de Valero Mission (the Alamo) where his son-in-law, Martin Perfecto de Cos, had suffered defeat and humiliation in late 1835. Some accounts claim that Santa Anna sought revenge on the Alamo defenders for their stunning rout of Cos that sent him back across the Rio Grande.³⁹ Santa Anna's advance forces attacked the Alamo on February 23, 1836. The vastly-outnumbered defenders held the Mexican army at bay for thirteen days in hopes that reinforcements would relieve them. Approximately 30 volunteers from Tennessee, including David Crockett, joined the Texians under cover of night. The final battle of the Alamo took place on March 6, 1836, when Santa Anna's superior numbers rushed the crumbling walls of the old mission, equipped with ladders and siege engines. Though he could have overwhelmed the Alamo defenders, and saved many of his own troops by launching his assault with trenches and siege cannon, Santa Anna instead ordered his soldiers to engage in bloody hand-to-hand combat, prior to the arrival of his own medical detachments, in an effort to demoralize other Texians.⁴⁰ In that same vein, he gave orders to take no prisoners. Santa Anna was reportedly pleased by the utter destruction of the Alamo, but while some 150 Texians died in the effort, about 600 Mexicans – a third of the general's assault force – also perished.⁴¹

Col. James W. Fannin, Jr.

James Fannin's birthdate is uncertain but he was probably born on January 1, 1804, near Marion, Georgia.⁴² He was adopted by his maternal grandfather, James W. Walker, and raised on the Walker family plantation. Fannin attended West Point from July 1819 to November 1821. He left West Point without a commission and returned to Georgia where he married Minerva Fort.⁴³ The couple had two daughters before the family moved to Velasco, a small town on the Texas Gulf Coast, in 1834. Fannin reportedly owned a plantation in partnership with Joseph Mims, possibly along the Brazos River where early colonists had already established plantations. His letters indicate that he also traded in slaves, another occupation of the lower Brazos.⁴⁴ By settling in Velasco, Fannin found himself in a hotbed of revolutionary fervor. Only two years earlier, in June 1832, colonists at the mouth of the Brazos River forcibly ousted Mexican Col. Domingo de

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ According to a diary kept by Mexican army officer Colonel José Enrique de la Peña, about 12 men did survive the final battle of the Alamo, including Davy Crockett. Santa Anna had all of them killed by firing squad. Women, children, and African Americans were set free. The diary, however, is controversial, and other accounts say that Crockett was killed while fighting.

⁴² Hartmann, Clinton P. "Fannin, James Walker, Jr.," *Handbook of Texas Online*, (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ffa02>), accessed March 03, 2015. Written 2010.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Ugartechea and his men from their fort at Velasco.⁴⁵ The underlying cause centered around taxes and regulations on river traffic but fighting erupted when Texians tried to bring a cannon from Brazoria to Anahuac by way of the Brazos River and Velasco.⁴⁶ Ugartechea, commander of the Mexican fort at Velasco, tried to prevent their passage into the Gulf, and said he would not let them pass. On June 25, as the Texians approached the fort, Ugartechea fired upon their ship and a fight ensued. Ultimately, Ugartechea ran out of ammunition and the whole garrison was forced to surrender.⁴⁷ As part of the treaty, Ugartechea was sent back to Mexico. Fannin surely was aware of the Battle of Velasco when he and his family moved to the town in 1834. As a plantation owner and slave trader, he likely shared the colonists' views and supported the Texian cause.⁴⁸ He participated in various revolutionary activities including soliciting funds from the United States Army officer in Georgia and requesting officers from West Point to command the Texas army.⁴⁹ As captain of the Brazos Guards, Fannin served in the Battle of Gonzales on October 2, 1835.⁵⁰ On October 27, Fannin and Jim Bowie established a campsite near Nuestra Senora de la Purisima Concepcion de Acuna Mission where they led the Texas forces in the Battle of Concepcion.⁵¹

Fannin played an active role in the early days of the War for Texas Independence, sometimes to recruit troops and contract for war supplies, and finally as an officer, both as a volunteer and a regular. When word came to Goliad that Matamoros had been taken by the Mexican army, Sam Houston quit the post, leaving Fannin as the ranking officer. Fannin was then elected colonel of the Provisional Regiment of Volunteers at Goliad on February 7, 1836.⁵² From February 12 to March 12, Fannin served as commander in chief of the army, his highest military rank.⁵³ On March 12, Fannin sent most of his troops to Refugio where Texian defenders were under siege. During that time, Gen. Santa Anna and his men laid siege to the Alamo and Gen. Sam Houston ordered Fannin to rush to the aid of the beleaguered Texians. Some accounts claim that Fannin blatantly ignored Houston's missive while others insist that Fannin tried to reach the Alamo but suffered multiple mishaps including the loss of wagons in crossing the San Antonio River, skirmishes with various bands of Mexicans, and oxen being deprived of food and water.⁵⁴ On March 14, Houston learned that the Alamo had fallen and rescinded the directive he had sent to Fannin.⁵⁵ Instead, Houston ordered Fannin to retreat to Victoria. Fannin waited five full days to obey Houston's command.⁵⁶

Battle of Coleto Creek

While Santa Anna laid siege to the Alamo, Gen. Jose de Urrea crossed the Rio Grande at Matamoros en route to the Texian stronghold at Goliad. On the way, he captured San Patricio, crushed the defenders at the Battle of Agua Dulce Creek, and took Lt. Col. William Ward and his troops by surprise.⁵⁷ All the while, Urrea kept his sights on Goliad, the prize of his expedition. Where Urrea was decisive and experienced, Col. James W. Fannin, commander of Goliad, lacked the experience and military acumen of his adversary, and did not enjoy the unanimous support of his men. One private, J.

⁴⁵ Texas State Historical Association, "Velasco, Battle of," *Handbook of Texas Online*, (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/gfv01>), accessed February 26, 2015. Author unknown.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hartmann.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Smith 1919:122; Huson 1953: 325

⁵⁵ Hartmann.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Roell, Craig H., "Battle of Coleto," *Handbook of Texas Online*, (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qec01>), accessed March 2, 2015. Written 2010.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

G. Ferguson, wrote in a letter to his brother that “the majority of the soldiers don’t like [Fannin].”⁵⁸ Ferguson went on to speculate that they either thought he did not have “the interests of the country at heart” or that he wished “to become great without taking the proper steps to attain greatness.”⁵⁹

On March 19, 1836, Fannin finally left La Bahia to meet Houston. It was foggy as the sun rose that morning, which delayed his departure. His cortege was large and lumbering, and included artillery, wagons, 1,000 muskets, baggage, and ammunition. About 300 soldiers guarded the slow-moving procession.⁶⁰ Fannin’s first mishap occurred while crossing the San Antonio River, when his largest cannon dropped into the water.⁶¹ The water-logged cannon was rendered useless and a hazard to others attempting the ford. Soon afterward, a wagon broke down and its cargo had to be transferred to another conveyance.⁶² Together, these accidents cost Fannin and his men considerable time and danger. Just as Fannin’s men got the wagon train back on the trail, another cart broke down. Once more, the troops had to stop and transfer the contents to another conveyance. At that time, Fannin decided to send about 40 cavalry troops ahead of the main force, leaving four horsemen to follow up the rear.⁶³ Apparently, he expected the Mexican army to approach from the east but that was not the case. Fannin first encountered an advance guard of Mexican cavalry about four miles east of Manahuilla Creek, behind the Texians. The enemy lay out of reach of the Texians’ artillery fire and Fannin, realizing his errors, urged his soldiers to push on to the tree cover along Coleta Creek (Figure 4, Map 3). The troops fell short of their goal.

All the while, Fannin was unaware of Urrea’s position; in fact, he had not seen any of his Mexican adversaries, possibly due to the heavy fog that lingered through the day. Urrea, on the other hand, possessed excellent intelligence on Fannin and his movements, collected from captured couriers.⁶⁴ Urrea tracked Fannin’s slow-paced struggle toward Victoria and sent his well-trained and disciplined cavalry after the struggling Texians. Fannin had only progressed about six miles when he called his troops to a halt, explaining that the men and animals were too exhausted to push on. In fact, they were close to Coleta Creek which would have provided water and tree cover. Urrea’s cavalry reached the creek first, blocking Fannin’s lifeline and giving themselves a great advantage. Outnumbered by the Mexican forces, Fannin expected his advance cavalry to return to the fray once they heard the artillery fire; however, only a handful risked charging through the Mexican lines. Of the four members Fannin had chosen as the rear guard, only Herman Ehrenberg dismounted to join his commanding officer and fellow soldiers. The others rode past Fannin and his men, and out of range of Urrea’s guns.⁶⁵

Fannin saw that he was being surrounded and made another attempt to reach the treeline along Coleta Creek. The ammunition wagon broke down on the way to the creek, forcing the troops to cluster around the immobilized cart. Fannin’s position was near untenable; the men were completely exposed with nothing more than prairie grass to shield them, they had run out of water but couldn’t reach the creek, their ammunition was limited, and Urrea’s superior forces advanced on them from all sides. Fannin had his men fashion a hollow square as his battle formation and set five infantry companies, augmented with some rifle squads, around the perimeter. He had enough men to arrange them three ranks deep.⁶⁶ Fannin had nine pieces of artillery, an advantage over Urrea, who had none. Col. Fannin placed the artillery, and four artillery squads, at the corners of the square to cover all directions. The Texians were also equipped with enough muskets to supply each man with three or four of the weapons.⁶⁷

⁵⁸ Hartmann.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Huson 1953: 326.

⁶¹ Roell, “Battle of Coleta.”

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Huson 1953: 330.

⁶⁵ Ehrenberg 1935: 171.

⁶⁶ Huson 1953: 333.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Though Urrea lacked artillery, his military skills and experience more than compensated for the lack of heavy weapons. In his first assault on the huddled Texians, he charged the exposed troops from all sides; he sent his troops after Fannin's front and flanks and ordered his cavalry to attack them from the rear. The Texians made good use of their extra muskets and agile artillery and the Mexicans withdrew. A second charge on the rear by the Mexican cavalry was likewise repulsed by the Texian artillery.⁶⁸ Fighting on the first day started about 1:30 p.m. and lasted until after dark, but the Mexican troops continued to harass the Texians throughout the night. Snipers shot sporadic volleys into the midst of the Texians and Urrea had his bugler periodically sound false attack signals to unnerve Fannin's men. Urrea had less ammunition than he had thought, but anticipated reinforcements, supplies, ammunition, and cannon the next day. The Texians had no such hope.⁶⁹

By the end of the day on March 19, 1836, the defenders took stock of their losses and found themselves in dire straits. Ammunition, which seemed so plentiful that morning, was now desperately low. Water, needed to cool the artillery and quickly reload it, was out of reach.⁷⁰ The artillery squads were targeted by the Mexican troops such that few experienced men survived to manage the big guns. That night, the men made desperate attempts to protect themselves: they dug trenches, overturned wagons and baggage, and dragged the carcasses of their dead oxen and horses to form breastworks. By dawn the next morning, Urrea received a good supply of ammunition, additional infantry, and cannons to counter the Texians' artillery. As the Mexicans leveled their cannons and the infantry positioned to attack, the wounded Fannin asked for terms of surrender, requesting that he and his men be treated as prisoners of war.

Terms of Surrender and Massacre

Different explanations exist about why the Texians surrendered rather than attempt to continue to fight or even flee the scene; some accounts credit them with standing by their wounded. Fannin's terms of surrender support that notion. Fannin signed what he understood to be a promise that his 50–70 wounded men would be cared for and that the remaining troops would be treated humanely and ultimately released.⁷¹ With that, Fannin and his army were marched back to Goliad where they were imprisoned. Fannin believed Urrea would protect his men as befitting prisoners of war. Urrea later claimed that he had made it clear to Fannin that he could only accept an unconditional surrender from him but that he would try to use his influence on the prisoners' behalf.⁷² Despite Fannin's hopes for himself and his men, the Mexican government had already taken the hard line position that foreigners who took up arms against the legal government of Mexico would be treated as pirates and not prisoners of war. A circular dated December 30, 1835, stated that such foreigners who entered Texas with the "purpose of attacking our territory shall be treated and punished as pirates, since they are not subjects of any nation at war with the republic nor do they militate under any recognized flag."⁷³ The circular had been widely printed throughout the United States and was intended to dissuade American rabble rousers from joining the Texian cause. The intent of the law was to free any Anglo colonists who were taken prisoner during the Texas campaign, but to consider combat volunteers from the United States as pirates with no legal standing.⁷⁴ Urrea reportedly asked the Mexican government to set aside this policy for Fannin and his men.⁷⁵ Believing his request would be granted, Urrea ordered the prisoners marched to Presidio La Bahia where he instructed Col. Jose Nicolas de la Portilla to put them to work building hospitals and repairing the fort.⁷⁶

⁶⁸ Huson 1953: 337, 339.

⁶⁹ Huson 1953: 340.

⁷⁰ Roell, "Battle of Coleto."

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Smith 1919.

⁷³ Borroel 1988: 149.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Smith 1919.

⁷⁶ Borroel 1988: 146-147.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

On March 26, 1836, Urrea wrote to Col. Portilla at La Bahía, reminding him to treat Fannin and his men well, as he had requested. That same day, Portilla received orders from General Santa Anna demanding their immediate execution.⁷⁷ In a humanitarian effort, Portilla, other Mexican officers, and one of their wives, Francisca Alavez (the Angel of Goliad), were able to save 83 of the condemned men from execution arguing that they possessed valuable skills that would be useful for their Mexican captors.⁷⁸ On March 27, 1836 (Palm Sunday), Urrea's men divided the Texians into three groups, marched them off in three different directions, and, on a signal, proceeded to shoot them. Several accounts claim that Fannin was separated from his men and shot. Approximately 342 Texian prisoners were executed, with about 28 escaping under gunfire.⁷⁹ The prisoners were caught by surprise, believing that Fannin had secured their safety as prisoners of war. Pandemonium reigned as the outnumbered Texians fought to escape their executioners. Some, including Herman Ehrenberg, who supplied much of the first-hand information on the battle, made their way to Coletto Creek where they swam across the stream to safety.⁸⁰ Col. Portilla ordered the bodies of his adversaries burned and their charred remains left exposed to the elements and scavengers. More than two months passed before Texian General Thomas J. Rusk came upon the scene, and on June 3, 1836, Rusk gathered their remains and buried them with military honors in a common grave.⁸¹

Development of Parks in Texas

It took nearly a century after the country's birth for U.S. citizens to embrace the idea of setting aside public lands for preservation and public enjoyment or elucidation. Typically, towns were laid out with designated public squares for a courthouse, park, or school. Many Texas county seats, for instance, are organized around a central square dedicated to a courthouse but used for public benefit such as picnics and monuments. The city of Goliad used open ground near its courthouse square in 1885 for a tall granite monument to Fannin and his men.⁸² The idea of establishing parks for larger audiences, however, did not take hold until much later. In an era of vast, open land and unbridled capitalism, few possessed the foresight to preserve some of that land for the public good. Nevertheless, with increasing density in the country's urban centers and growing awareness of the loss of frontier, progressive statesmen began to embrace the concept of land stewardship over exploitation.⁸³

After the Civil War, large reunions and summertime festivals came into vogue across the country. Some of these festivals, including Civil War veterans' reunions, Juneteenth celebrations, and religious revivals, took place on dedicated campgrounds owned in common by the participants. By the 1890s, increased rail access and better roadways opened the country up to thousands of travelers across the country. National parks grew in popularity as more and more Americans clamored to experience their awe-inspiring natural beauty, particularly in the West, as improvements in transportation opened the western sites to greater use. Increasingly, families took the railroad to such exotic places as Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon where they stayed in rustic hotels or camped in the open meadows.⁸⁴

The state park system in Texas was something of an outgrowth of the national enchantment with the country's history and natural sites. John Ireland was elected Texas Governor during the beginnings of this public park movement. When he took office in 1883, Ireland initiated programs to preserve, protect, and enhance Texas natural and cultural resources. With an

⁷⁷ Huson 1953.

⁷⁸ Borroel 1988:158; Hardin 2001.

⁷⁹ Davenport, H., and C. H. Roell "Goliad Massacre," Handbook of Texas Online, (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qeg02>), accessed March 2, 2015.

⁸⁰ Hardin 2001.

⁸¹ Davenport and Roell, "Goliad Massacre."

⁸² Davenport, Harbert, and Craig H. Roell. "Goliad Massacre," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

⁸³ McClelland, Linda, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1998. Pg. 2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

eye toward using the state's resources to benefit its people, he established a permanent economic base for the state's school systems by halting the railroad land-grant program and setting aside millions of acres in West Texas as public domain. Furthermore, as part of a "Texas First" campaign, Ireland selected native red granite from Burnet County to build the new capitol in Austin instead of going outside the state to Indiana for limestone.

Ireland also acknowledged the passing of Texas pioneers, especially those who remembered or participated in the War for Texas Independence. Noting the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the Texas Revolution, Ireland urged the legislature to designate important and endangered sites as state parks, most significant among them being the Alamo and the San Jacinto Battleground cemetery. The Legislature concurred and established them as the state's first public parks.⁸⁵

In 1891, the newly formed Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT), supporting the efforts of the Texas Veterans Association, petitioned the state legislature to acquire more land at San Jacinto Battleground and to build a suitable memorial to be erected at the site. Their timing proved poor as the country entered an economic depression in 1893, and legislators refused to support the expenditure of funds on non-essential programs. Four years later, however, the DRT received help from Houston senator Waller Thomas Burns who managed to wrest \$10,000 from the legislature for the establishment of a 336-acre public park at San Jacinto.⁸⁶

The short-lived Republic of Texas inspired virtually all early park success in Texas. In 1905, DRT enrollee Clara Driscoll convinced the legislature to buy the building known as the Long Barracks adjacent to the Alamo church for \$65,000. At the same time, the La Grange chapter of the DRT successfully petitioned the legislature to acquire a cemetery associated with the notorious Mier Expedition which resulted in the lottery-style execution of Texan patriots under Santa Anna's orders. As the fiftieth anniversary of the Revolution neared, the legislature funded major improvements to the Alamo and arranged for the re-internment of Stephen F. Austin in the state cemetery at Austin. Invigorated by the zeal of the anniversary, numerous communities offered land commemorating battles of the revolution.

Still, once the initial effort passed, little attention was given to state parks until 1913. Among local people lobbying for commemorative parks were Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Hanley of Fannin, who donated land for a state park. Working in conjunction with Leopold Morris, a state legislator from Victoria, members of the Fannin chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, and Goliad officials, the coalition succeeded in getting a bill passed through the Senate to formally designate the former battleground as a state preserve known generally as Fannin State Park. Nearby Gonzales, considered the site of the first hostilities in the War for Texas Independence, was also honored with a historical state park, in the city and not at the battlefield.⁸⁷

Early state efforts to enhance and preserve any parks "system" were minimal even though the dedicated historic sites had widespread support from the populace. The legislature deemed it enough to bestow the designation and leave them to local patriots, in the form of committees that reported to the state's Board of Control after 1919, to maintain and interpret. In 1916, the state erected a 28-foot granite monument to Fannin and his men on the battleground, and Governor James Ferguson attended the park's dedication. The granite marker is Neoclassical in style with an obelisk and square base atop an elaborate pedestal, a simplified but remarkably similar design to the 1885 Fannin Monument in the city of Goliad. Its basic design, formal and reverent, is found throughout history for memorial or dedication sites and in funerary monuments in cemeteries.

⁸⁵ Steely, James. *Parks for Texas*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999. Pgs. 1-5.

⁸⁶ McClelland, Linda, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1998. Pg. 2.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

These occasional flurries for designating state parks led to others. Interest in early Texas history continued in the first decades of the twentieth century and resulted in the designation of additional historic sites as state parks, although the legislature continued to lag behind with development support. Also in the 1910's, prior to the U.S. entry into World War I, Texas' patriotic infatuation with the people and events of the Republic pushed the state legislature to add two more state parks associated with the revolution: King's in 1915 (Amon Butler King capture at Refugio) and Washington-on-the-Brazos in 1916, where the Texas declaration of independence was signed in 1836. Together with Goliad, Gonzales, and San Jacinto, these five were first governed by Governor-appointed local commissions and, after 1919, with the commissions reporting to the State Board of Control, which also managed the Capitol grounds and State Cemetery in Austin. Three other historic sites funded by the legislature were also associated with the Texas Revolution: the DRT managed the Alamo, and local volunteers cared for memorials at La Grange and Acton – the grave of David Crockett's widow, Elizabeth.⁸⁸

In 1923 Governor Pat Neff attempted to establish a state park system through the Legislature's creation of the State Parks Board (SPB). Neff's system would fulfil his dream of dozens of recreation parks along a new statewide network of highways, but would not incorporate the existing "memorial" parks, as he called them. The SPB struggled for another 10 years before adequate recognition, funding, and a labor force of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) came with the federal New Deal in 1933. Until then, SPB's halting initiatives and meager board-member travel funding continually confused Legislators with the Board of Control's slightly less meager requests for its historical parks' funding.⁸⁹

Local residents in the vicinity of the Coletto Creek battleground made good use of the Fannin State Park as a site for celebration and remembrance. After World War I, citizens welcomed returning soldiers by hosting a picnic near Coletto Creek. The park's bandstand, built in 1928 as part of a \$3,250 state appropriation for improvements including the water system,⁹⁰ became an informal museum when local residents displayed musket balls and other battleground artifacts in its enclosed lower level. The post-World War I veterans' picnic had become an annual event, and was moved to Fannin State Park about 1938 when the picnic pavilion was constructed.⁹¹

Planning for the Centennial of Texas Independence in 1936 created the largest flurry ever of statewide interest in commemorating significant places associated with the Texas Revolution. All the state historical parks, and hundreds of other sites and monuments, received improvements funded with \$3 million of state appropriations, matched by \$3 million in federal funds provided through the "United States Texas Centennial Commission" chaired by U.S. Vice President—and Texan from Uvalde—John Nance Garner. Fannin State Park received \$5,000 from the federal Centennial funds to build its 1938 picnic pavilion. The building's designers, renowned Texas architect Sam Vosper and his protégé Raiford Stripling, worked from their office in Goliad, originally set up to design and supervise restoration of nearby Spanish Mission Espiritu Santo, now part of Goliad State Park being developed with federal CCC and other New Deal program labor, and Centennial funding.⁹²

The annual Fannin State Park picnic, held on or near San Jacinto Day (April 21), continued after World War II as a time for residents to gather and remember the past. While no longer occurring, the tradition of that community picnic has become permanently entwined in the history of this site. The pavilion also hosted community dances and other events.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 4.

⁸⁹ Steely, James. *Parks for Texas*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999. Pgs. 5–9.

⁹⁰ *House Journal* [of the Texas Legislature]. Third Called Session, 1929. Pgs. 218–219.

⁹¹ Carlyn Hammons 2002: 4.

⁹² Schoen, Harold, compiler. *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence, The Report of the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations*. Austin: Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, 1938. Pgs. 2, 9, 55. Steely, James. *Parks for Texas*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999. Pgs. 86, 206.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Birthday parties, bridal showers, family reunions, barbecues, and dances have all been held here over the years, and for a time children used the reservoir as a swimming pool.⁹³

Development of the Fannin Battlefield as a Park⁹⁴

Decades passed with seemingly little interest given to the former battleground and its role in Texas history. In 1858, William L. Hunter, one of the few Texian survivors of the Goliad massacre, returned to the site and stacked a pile of rocks near his recollection of the center of the battle. The landscape likely remained undeveloped coastal prairie and ranch land even after the Gulf, Western Texas & Pacific Railway was built through the area and established the community of Fannin in 1889.⁹⁵ As the nineteenth century came to a close, many Texans took up an interest in the people and events that had figured so large in the state's unique history. Groups organized to preserve buildings, battlegrounds, and other sites where Texas' history was made.

It is uncertain how the land on which the park now sits was used in the nineteenth century. However, Hugh B. Hanley, who owned the land at the turn of the century, claims he had such reverence for the site that he never allowed cultivation on it, nor did he allow cattle to be rounded up on it because he didn't want their hooves to beat down on what one newspaper called the "circular embankment" believed to be Fannin's entrenchments.⁹⁶ On October 15, 1894, Solomon Parks, Sr., thinking Hunter's rock pile too ephemeral, replaced it with a giant iron cotton gin press screw.⁹⁷ Two more decades would pass before the battleground would receive further recognition; and then it would be done in the context of commemorative but passive state parks.

On July 8, 1913, Hanley and his wife, Lizzie, filed a deed with Goliad County transferring ten acres of land containing "Fannin's Battlefield" to the State of Texas. Newspaper accounts credit both State Representative Leopold Morris and Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) president (Fannin Chapter) L. G. Kreisle with getting the support needed to pass a bill that would allow the State to accept the donation. The 33rd Legislature accepted the land and placed it under the control of the Superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds. In 1914, the state erected a concrete wall, four feet high and eight inches thick, around the ten-acre site and also placed iron gates, formerly of the capitol grounds, at the entrance (see Figure 1).⁹⁸ An arched entrance sign read "Fannin Battlefield," but all official documents referred to the site as Fannin Park or Fannin State Park.

The Legislature appropriated \$5,000 for park improvements in 1916. Park planners hoped to erect a bronze statue as the park's central figure, but the prohibitive cost caused them to choose instead a simple gray granite shaft. They placed the monument in the center of three concentric circles, each one built up about a foot higher than the other (see Figure 2). Planners chose a circular drive so as to keep the focus on that central monument. All land outside the circles and drive was "thoroughly plowed" and "harrowed twice over."⁹⁹ Presumably, this included the visible circular embankments referred to in the 1913 newspaper article. Workers laid water pipes throughout the park and constructed a water tank, reservoir and windmill. They sodded the park with Bermuda grass and planted 388 trees, including 200 hackberry trees that were to be

⁹³ Texas Historical Commission, "Exhibits," Fannin Battleground State Historic Site website. (<http://www.visitfanninbattleground.com/index.aspx?page=980>) accessed March 16, 2015.

⁹⁴ This section and its subsections were adapted with author's permission from Hammons, *A Report on the Fannin Battleground State Historical Park*. Report produced for Texas Parks and Wildlife, Austin, Texas, 2002.

⁹⁵ Roell, Craig H. "Fannin, TX." *Handbook of Texas Online*.

⁹⁶ *Goliad Guard*, 10 March 1913.

⁹⁷ Roell, C.H. "Fannin Battleground State Historic Site," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

⁹⁸ Reference to the iron gates is made in a letter to the Fannin State Park Commission from R. Aubrey Smelser, Chief of the Building Engineering and Management Division, 9 September 1960, Texas State Library and Archives; Records, State Board of Control, Executive Director files.

⁹⁹ "Specifications and Recommendations for Fannin Park," 23 May 1916, Goliad County Library, The White Family Papers.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

removed once the larger slower growing shade trees reached maturity. Planners also wanted to build a caretaker's house and barn in the northwestern corner of the property, but the \$5,000 appropriation did not leave them enough money to do so.¹⁰⁰

In 1918, Mrs. Louise L. Parks sold 3.62 acres to the State. That land became the site of the caretaker's residence and barn. It is unclear when the two structures were built, but they were in place by 1923 when newly hired caretaker E. N. Strong and his family moved in. There is no documentation to suggest who cared for the park before Strong's arrival, but local residents believe it was a man known only as Mitchell. Management of the park transferred from the Superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds to the newly created State Board of Control in 1919. However, the Board of Control shared joint supervision with the Fannin State Park Commission, which consisted of three local residents appointed by the governor.¹⁰¹

The Two-Story Bandstand and Other Improvements

By 1926, the concrete wall surrounding the park was leaning and even falling down in some places. Contractors had to install iron braces at each corner of the park and pour concrete foundations at the base of the sections where the wall was falling down. At the same time, they replaced the dirt walks with concrete ones and poured additional concrete curbs.¹⁰² Work began on the two-story, octagonal bandstand structure in late 1927. Ed Wagner, of Victoria, drew the plans for the building, and J. M. Blake, a Goliad contractor, built it. Plans called for an open-air, roofed bandstand or speaker's platform upstairs and two restrooms and storage space downstairs. Blake also built a dozen benches and tables.¹⁰³ The dedication ceremony for the new building took place on March 2, 1928, and included a tree dedication ceremony as well. Lizzie Hanley, Sol Parks, L. G. Kreisle, and Leopold Morris received trees in their honor.¹⁰⁴ The markers from this ceremony are on display at the park today.

The lower-level room of the building soon became a museum of sorts, though it is not clear if this was the original intention of the space. Objects on display included lead shot and cannon balls believed to be from the historic battle, a spinning wheel, various firearms and swords, a meteorite, and other objects that local residents thought should be on display. Although doubtful that many of the objects were actually related to the battle, at least one newspaper article claimed that many artifacts were found in the ground on the site, and that musket balls, sabers, and spurs could be pulled from the ground with the "slightest provocation."¹⁰⁵ Caretaker Strong made labels for each artifact in the museum and gave talks to visitors about the battle and the artifacts on display. Articles from the 1920s and 1930s fill the Goliad newspapers with praise for the beauty of the park. They describe a lush landscape, filled with thousands of flowers and neatly trimmed shrubs, trees, and grass. They attribute the park's appearance, the picnic area's cleanliness, and the museum's interesting displays to the hard work and dedication of the caretaker, E. N. Strong.

¹⁰⁰ Various contracts awarded to local contractors by the Legislature, August 1916, Goliad County Library, The White Family Papers.

¹⁰¹ Texas Legislative Council, *Texas State Parks: A Report to the 56th Legislature* (1958).

¹⁰² Contract for fence repair and concrete work, 24 August 1926, awarded by W.E. Fowler of Fannin State Park Commission to Ed Ellis, Goliad County Library, The White Family Papers.

¹⁰³ Contract and Specifications for Pavilion and Rest Rooms, 21 November 1927, awarded by State Board of Control to J.M. Blake, Goliad County Library, The White Family Papers.

¹⁰⁴ *Goliad Advance-Guard*, 8 March 1928.

¹⁰⁵ *Victoria Advocate*, 27 October 1949.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Centennial Improvements at the Park

The Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations directed all centennial improvements at Texas parks through the Centennial Division of the State Board of Control. The bulk of these park improvements occurred from 1935 to 1938. State centennial funds paid for some projects, while grants from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA) funded others. The Fannin State Park received \$5,000 in federal funds, allocated by the United States Texas Centennial Commission.¹⁰⁶ The State Board of Control hired the architectural firm of Vosper and Stripling (Raiford Stripling being the restoration architect working on the Goliad missions at this same time) to design a new building for the park. The Board hired T. E. Stone, of Victoria, for the construction work consisting of "the addition of a shelter, and alterations to the existing structure containing a relic room, rest rooms, and water system."¹⁰⁷ Work on the shelter began on February 1, 1938, and was complete by summer of that same year. The completed project consisted of a rectangular open-air pavilion and the addition of a small portico for the museum building and white lattice fencing between the pavilion and bandstand/museum building. Fanninites recall that this fence resembled a hallway of sorts between the two structures and that the only way to access the stairs to the top floor of the bandstand was to walk into the pavilion first. The 1938 Centennial Pavilion was the last major improvement added to the park, besides the relatively small items such as barbeque pits and playground equipment. Though State Board of Control accounts reflect small appropriations made to the park by the Legislature every year, no other major structures or features were added.¹⁰⁸ Numerous small repairs required attention, including a leaky roof on the caretaker's cottage and portions of the concrete wall that fell over again in 1938.¹⁰⁹

Post-1938

From the late 1930s through to the early 1950s, local newspapers continued to commend the park and Strong for the pleasant atmosphere. A weekly column in the *Goliad Advance-Guard* entitled "Fannin Items," consistently announced events being held in the park including picnics, dinners, 4-H and Boy Scouts meetings, church gatherings, showers, dances, field trips, even residents bringing out-of-town houseguests to relax in the park. Interviews with residents who used the park during this time confirm the frequency of such activities and the beauty and cleanliness of the park. There was a nickel juke box housed in a cabinet in the rectangular pavilion and children enjoyed roller skating on the concrete walkways.

In 1963, Mr. Strong, who was now in his late 70s, announced he would retire.¹¹⁰ He was replaced with seasonal worker C.W. Reyes, and then Dan Garza replaced Reyes in April of 1966.¹¹¹ Property inspections from the late 1950s found the park in a very poor state of repair, and blamed the conditions on lack of adequate funding. Among the deterioration noted in 1956 and 1958 were rotten porches and steps at the caretaker's residence, a crumbling concrete wall, rotten portico posts and lattice at the pavilions, both buildings needed paint, the water tank and reservoir leaked, the 40-year old water

¹⁰⁶ *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence: The Report of the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations* (Austin, 1938): 9-13, 55.

¹⁰⁷ Centennial Division Minutes, 19 November 1937, Texas State Library and Archives; Records, State Board of Control. Quote from *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas*, 55.

¹⁰⁸ For amount of appropriations, see the *Biennial Report of the State Board of Control*, published in even-numbered years beginning in 1924.

¹⁰⁹ 1938 Budget Inspection of Fannin State Park, Texas State Library and Archives; Records, State Board of Control, Division of Estimates and Appraisals files.

¹¹⁰ State Audit Report, 31 August 1963, Texas State Library and Archives; Records, State Board of Control, Executive Director files. Strong's health is also discussed in various correspondence filed with the Audit Report.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Also confirmed by Dan Garza, telephone interview by Carlyn Copeland, 5 March 2002.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

lines leaked and were inadequate to meet the park's needs, and picnic areas were too small to accommodate the large number of visitors.¹¹²

In 1959, Goliad County widened and paved Farm-to-Market Road 2506. The Fannin State Park Commission and the State Board of Control granted the county a few feet of right-of-way and, in return, the county removed and disposed of the concrete wall bordering the road.¹¹³ The three other sides of the wall remained for several more years in a state of dangerous disrepair. Inspectors noted as late as July 1964 that the wall was in danger of toppling, possibly onto children who played in the park.¹¹⁴ It is unclear as to when the three remaining sides of the concrete wall were torn down. In 2002, Red Strong (the caretaker's son) and Glenn Bego (who lived near the park) remembered that workers buried the remains of the wall in two large pits—one near the water tank and one in the southeast corner of the property near the caretaker's house. Hurricane Carla blew through Goliad County in October of 1961, causing more damage to the already deteriorating park. High winds blew the monument completely off its base and shingles off all roofs and knocked down trees and electrical lines. The park received only a small amount of state funds to repair the storm damages.¹¹⁵

Inspectors continued to note the worsening conditions at the park, and the Board of Control and the Fannin State Park Commission continued to plead for more adequate funding to make the necessary repairs, but to no avail. The Legislature continued to appropriate only enough money to keep the park running, but none to make improvements. In December 1962, Executive Director of the State Board of Control William Burke suggested that perhaps the park should be identified instead as Fannin Battleground rather than as a mere park. He reasoned that this designation might call more attention to the historical significance of the site and therefore draw more funds. The 58th Legislature (House Bill No. 371) saw fit to change the name of Fannin State Park to Fannin State Battleground, effective August 23, 1963. The site received a very slight increase in funds for repairs in 1962, 1963, and 1964, but it was not enough to completely repair the entire park. The 59th Legislature (House Bill No. 102) transferred the control and custody of the Fannin State Battleground from the State Board of Control to the Parks and Wildlife Commission (later Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, or TPWD), effective September, 1965. The TPWD initiated certain improvements including routine maintenance of park structures, removal of the deteriorated rock wall that surrounded the park, and repairing damage caused by Hurricane Carla.¹¹⁶ In 1974, under the tenure of the TPWD, an Official Texas Historical Marker (OTHM 5175000322) was placed near the park commemorating the Battle of Coleto Creek and the Goliad Massacre. The park was transferred to the Texas Historical Commission in 2007, and a full restoration of park structures was completed in 2012. It is now known as Fannin Battleground State Historic Site.

Summary of Significance

*Criterion A: Conservation*¹¹⁷

Fannin Battlefield State Historic Site is significant for several reasons. It commemorates the site of the battle between Col. James Fannin and his Texian troops and Mexican forces, and Fannin's subsequent surrender in March of 1836. Secondly, the park is historically significant because it is one of the oldest state parks in Texas. The state acquired both the Alamo

¹¹² 1956 and 1958 Inspections of Fannin State Park, Texas State Library and Archives; Records, State Board of Control, Executive Director files.

¹¹³ Correspondence, Walter Bluntzer and the Fannin State Park Commission to William Burke, 2 December 1958, Texas State Library and Archives; Records, State Board of Control, Executive Director files.

¹¹⁴ 1964 Inspection of Fannin State Battleground, Texas State Library and Archives; Records, State Board of Control, Executive Director files.

¹¹⁵ "A Report on Storm Damage," March 1962, Texas State Library and Archives; Records, State Board of Control, Executive Director files.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1110.

¹¹⁷ Hammons.

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

and the San Jacinto Battleground in the 1880s, but obtained no other sites until 1913. In that year, the state acquired and appropriated funds for improvements at the Fannin State Park (as well as for the Gonzales State Park).¹¹⁸ Therefore, the park at Fannin was one of the first to be designated as a state park in the twentieth century, and it is one of the four oldest historical parks in Texas. The historic buildings and structures have survived with few modifications. Every year since 1917, residents from the town of Fannin have gathered for a community picnic on or near San Jacinto Day (April 21). Originally, residents held the picnic at the river, but moved the celebration to the Fannin State Park about 1938. Each year Fannin residents, and even former residents, gather at the park for a reunion of sorts. It was the prime location of birthday parties, weddings and baby showers, family reunions and picnics, church group meetings and dinners, civic group conferences and luncheons. The local school was less than one-quarter mile away, and so the park served as a playground and an off-campus site for dances, parties, and meetings. For much of the twentieth century, the park was lushly landscaped, filled with fragrant flowers, shrubs, and shade trees. As a place of such beauty, it was a locus of gathering for the community.

Criterion D: Archeology

Archeological investigations from 2001, 2011, and 2014 have confirmed the park as the actual location of the Battle of Coleto Creek, recovering numerous artifacts related to the event. Just as importantly, the studies have shown strong spatial integrity to the artifact distribution, reflecting specific actions and troop locations during the famous battle. While the park has a long history of development, neglect, and improvements that have negatively affected the depositional setting of the site and its artifacts, archeological investigations have shown that the integrity of the site has not been completely destroyed. Potential for more deeply buried artifacts exist in the park, particularly in less disturbed areas, presenting opportunities for future technologies to recover further information. With artifacts and their distributions showing solid spatial integrity related to the battle events, the potential of the site to yield new information is good despite the past disturbances, leaving several avenues of research to further reconstruct the battle and the positions of the combatants. Questions that may be answered through further investigations include the following:

- Does the subsurface linear anomaly discovered with GPR by WSA in 2014 west and parallel to the county road represent Texian defensive works from the battle? If so, how does the location comport with accounts of the battle?
- Could remnants of features (earthen-works or related trenches, artifacts, etc.) from the battle still be deeply preserved in the vicinity of the gin screw which was close to the center of the Texian forces? Could mechanical scraping or other mechanical exploratory means reveal such features or have all traces been removed through park development?
- Considering the limitations of the modern metal detecting technology and the soils at the site, can our understanding of the details of the battle be further refined with the recovery of artifacts from contexts deeper than those found in the previous investigations through new technologies? In other words, could future, potentially more advanced means of subsurface exploration yield new information from the battle? This may be particularly applicable on the main, eastern section of the park that were investigated with GPR technologies 15 years ago.
- The archeological investigations that have taken place at the site indicate that the Texian forces were concentrated in the area that is marked by the gin screw. Would additional investigations help to clarify where the Mexican forces were situated?

¹¹⁸ Texas Legislative Council, *Texas State Parks: A Report to the 56th Legislature* (1958).

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

- Several Texian soldiers were killed during the battle and were purportedly buried at the site. Would additional and more extensive GPR survey locate the burials?
- Lead ammunition balls and shot are the most common artifacts recovered by the archeological investigations. Would lead isotope analysis of these and other yet to be recovered ammunition items indicate the sources of the lead used to make the projectiles, which could then provide an association to either the Texian forces or the Mexican forces?

Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

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Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Section 10: Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

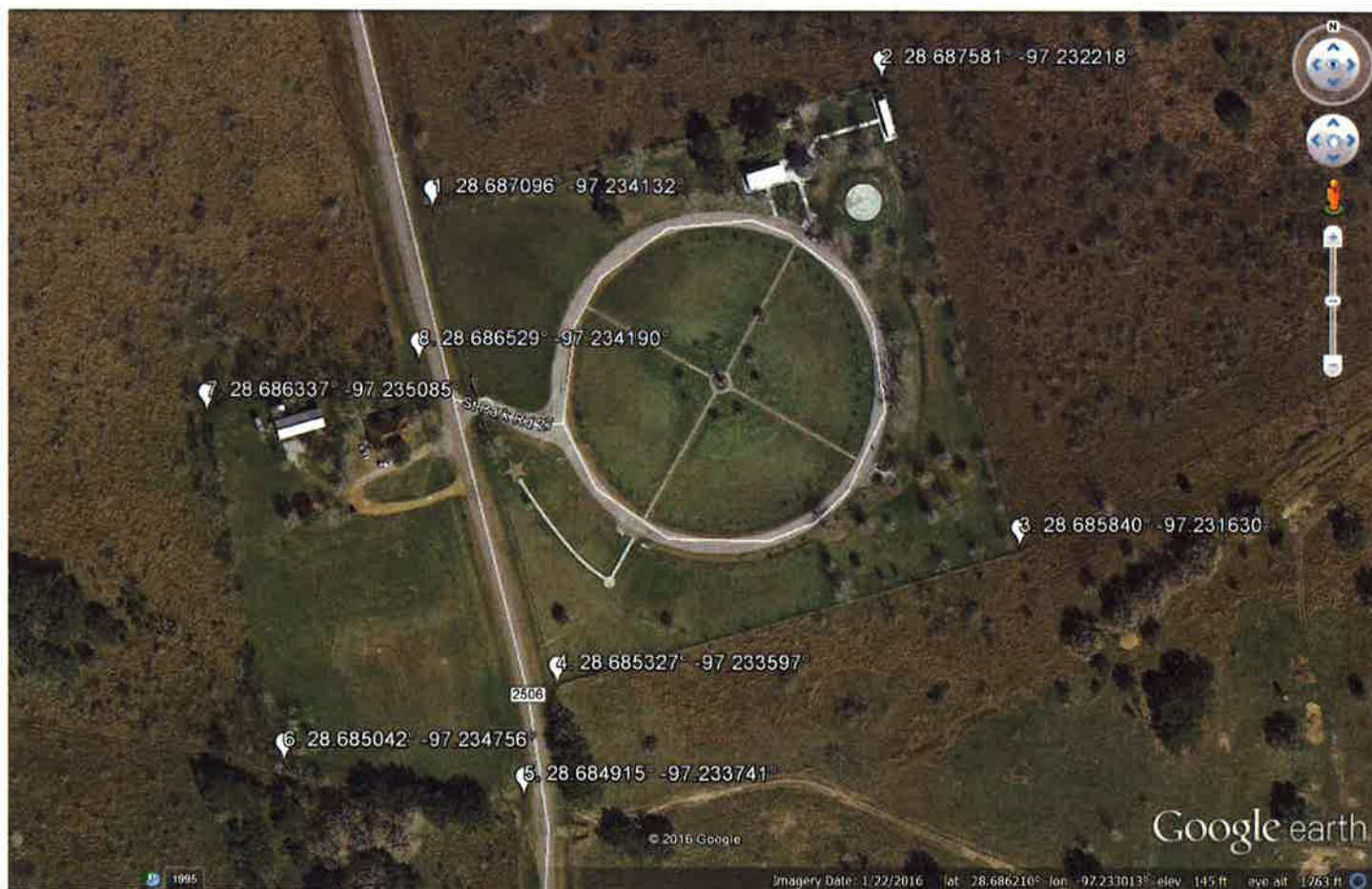
The Fannin Battleground State Historic Site District is a 13.6-acre non-contiguous site that straddles FM 2506 just south of the town of Fannin in Goliad County, Texas. The east parcel, on the east side of FM 2506, is a 10-acre, four-sided polygon resembling a square that incorporates all of the park land on that side of the road. The west parcel is a five-sided polygon with an eastern boundary that follows the gentle curve of FM 2506. The western portion of the district incorporates the site on which the caretaker lived.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all property associated with the battle and its commemoration that is currently owned by the State of Texas under the jurisdiction of the Texas Historical Commission. The area also incorporates all previous archeological investigation sites, and the entirety of the park that was developed as a commemorative site in the late 19th century.

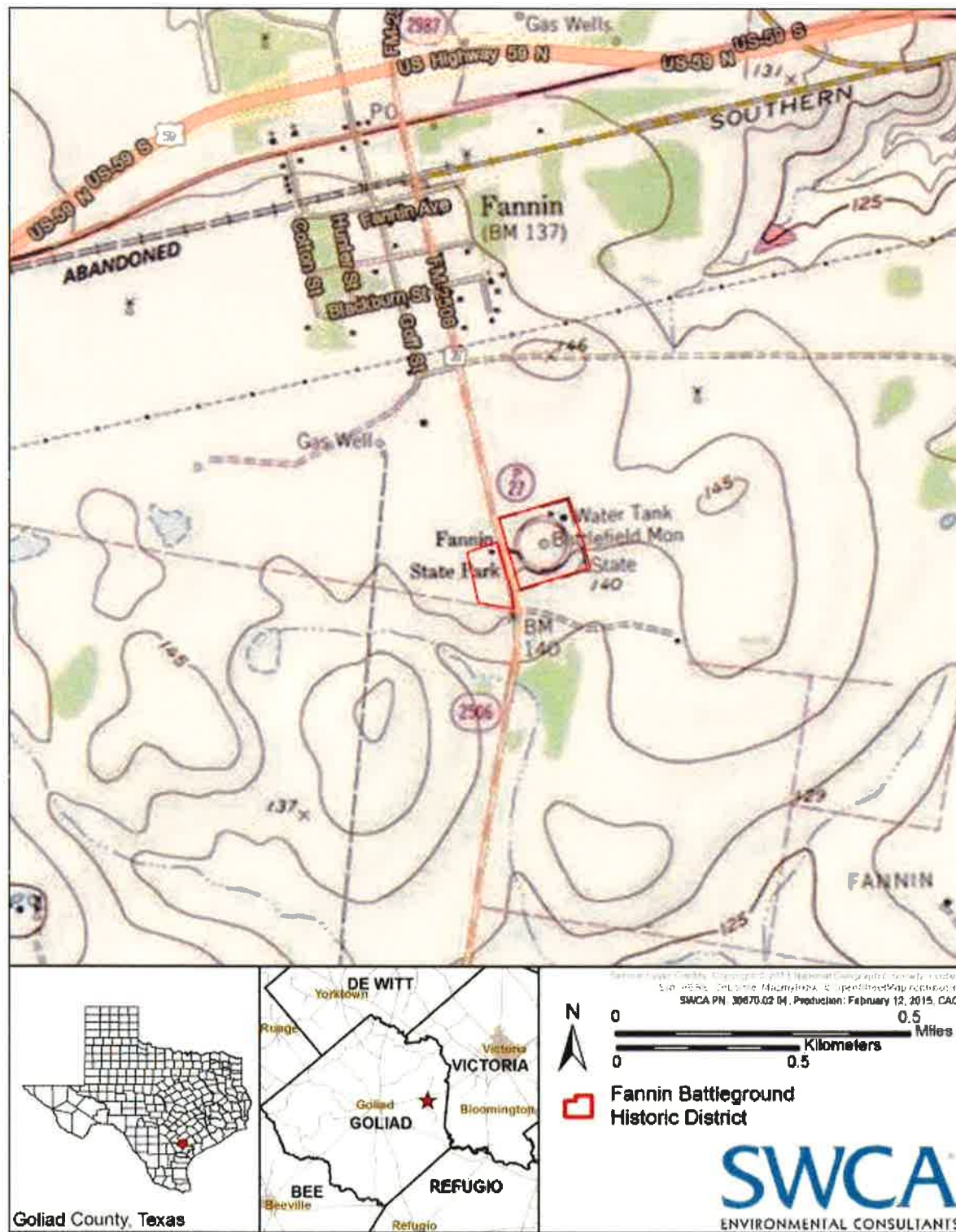
Map 1: Boundary Map

Source: Google Earth, accessed May 31, 2016.



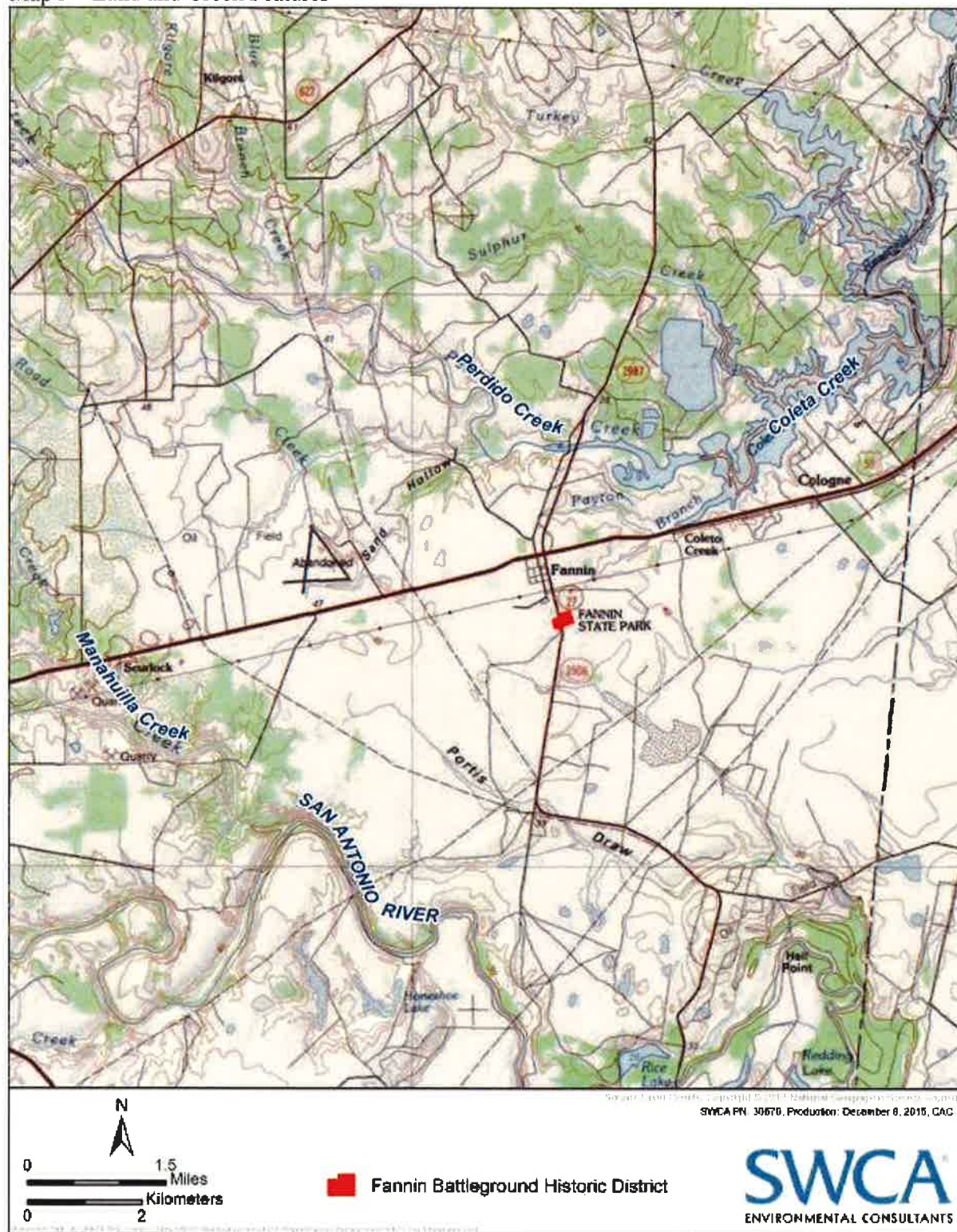
Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Map 2 - Fannin Battleground Location



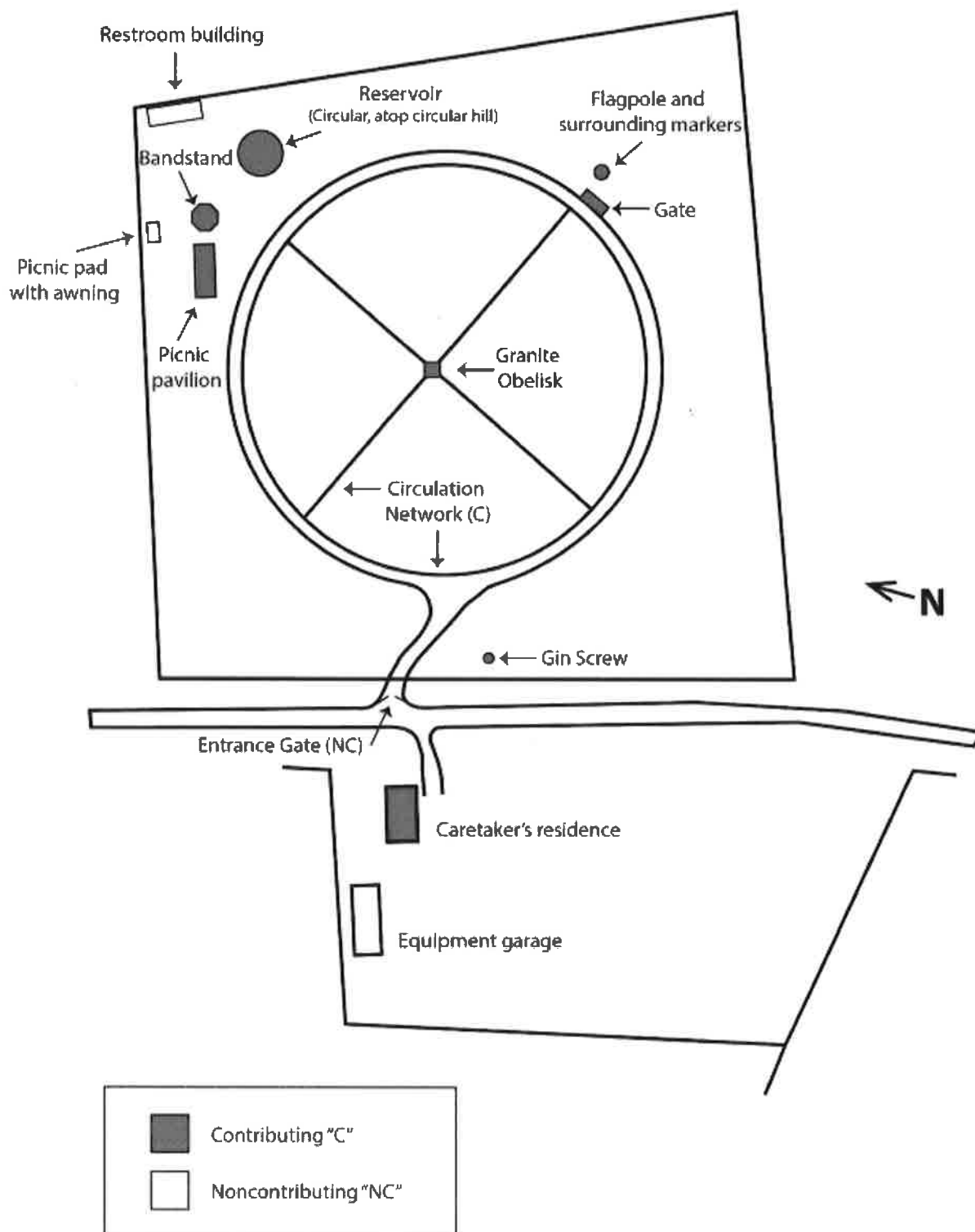
Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Map 3 – Land and Creek Features



Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Map 4 - Site Map

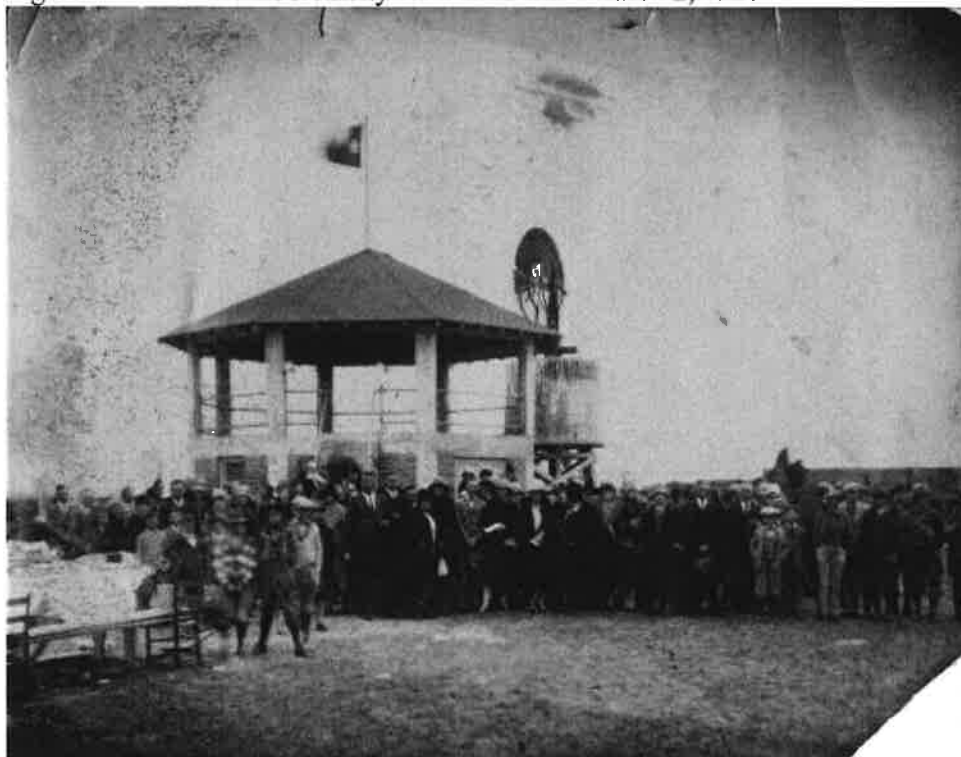


Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Figure 1 - Historic photo of gin screw

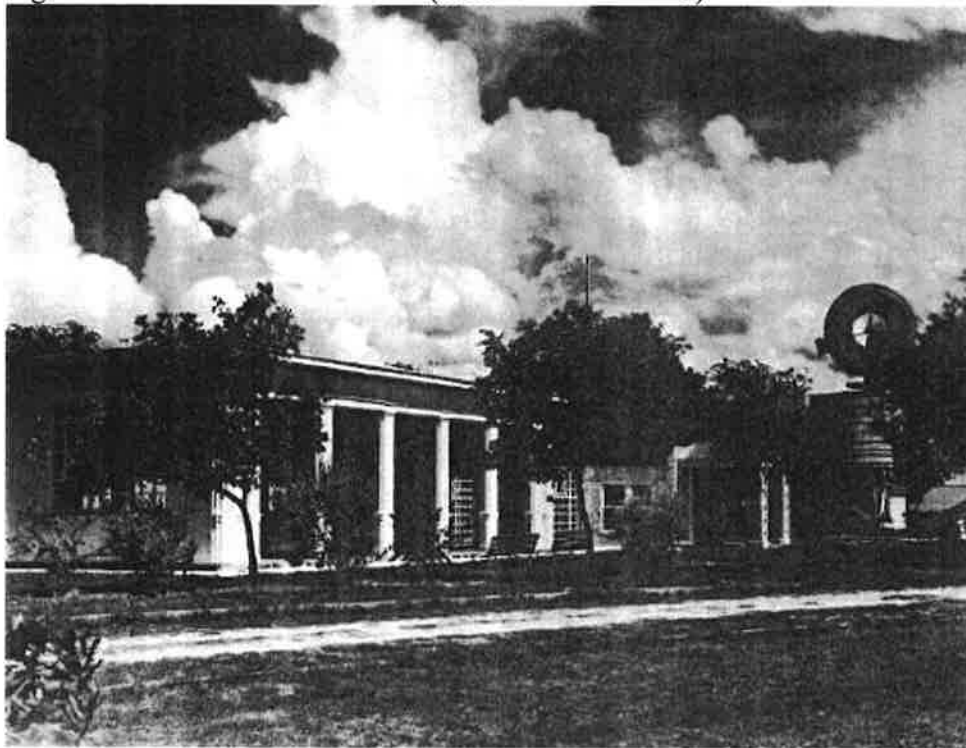


Figure 2 - Dedication Ceremony for Bandstand - March 2, 1928



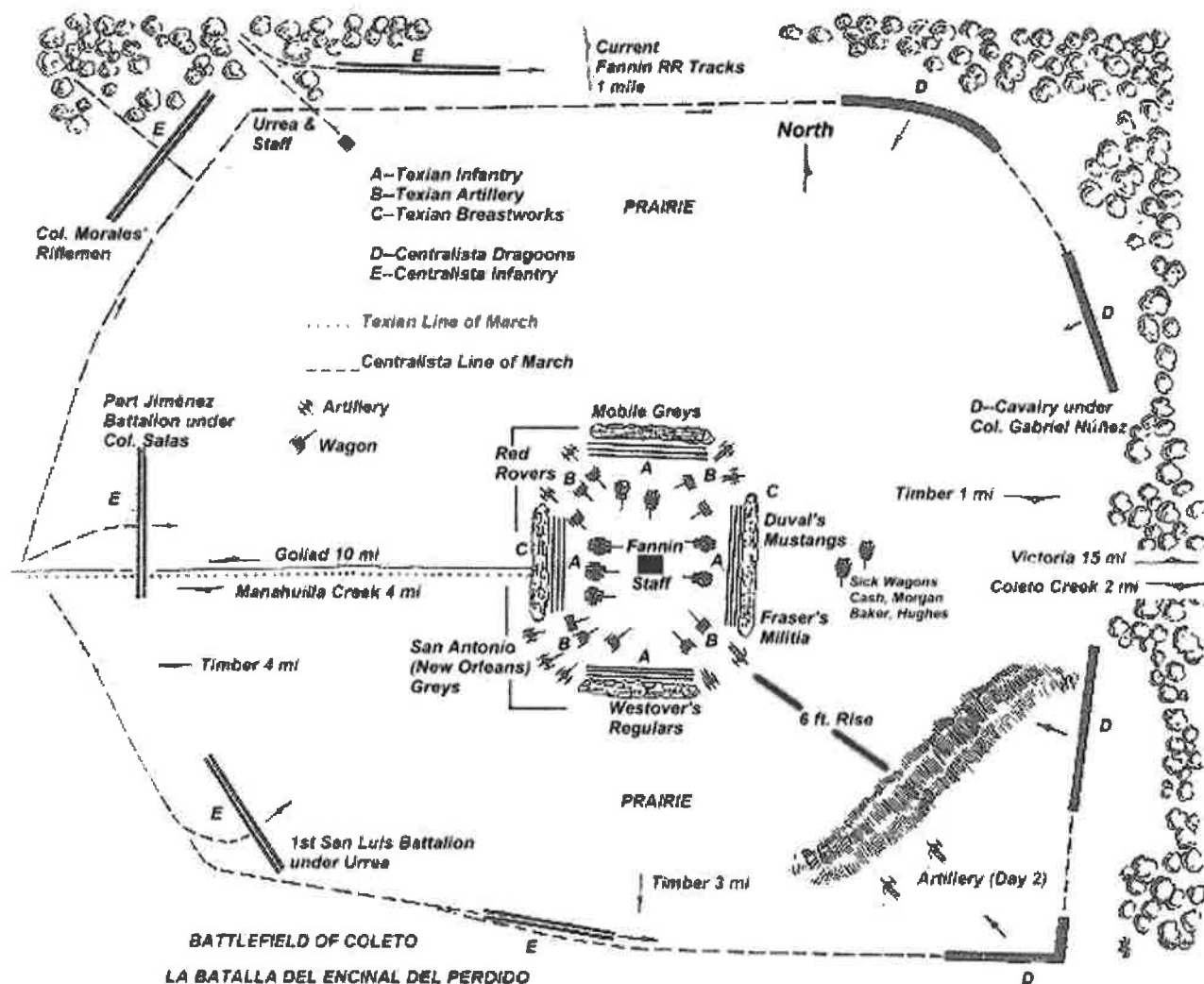
Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Figure 3 - View of Pavilion – 1938 (from Schoen 1938:55)



Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Figure 4 – Sketch of Battle of Coletto Creek, Accessed from and Courtesy of:
<http://www.tamu.edu/faculty/ccbn/dewitt/goliadmassacremap.htm>



Background: 2010 NAIP imagery, 2006 map provided by SWCA. PM: 10/24/11. Prepared: July 21, 2014. CAZ

Legend:

- Park Boundary
- Survey Area
- Disturbed/Excluded Area
- SWCA Lead Balls
- TPWD Lead Balls
- Buried Utility Lines

Scale:

0 200 Feet
0 50 Meters

SWCA
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Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Figure 6 - Galindo et al. 2013_pg.14_Representative Sample of Recovered Iron and Lead Ammunition balls



Figure 7 - portrait of James Walker Fannin ca. 1830 by Samuel Morris courtesy Dallas Historical Society



Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Photo 1

Ornate cast iron gate, facing west



Photo 2

Gin screw, facing east/northeast into park



Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Photo 3
Circular drive, facing east toward flagpole and gate



Photo 4
Western portion of district across FM 2506, facing west



Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Photo 5

Western portion of district, facing northwest toward gin screw, gate, caretaker house



Photo 6

Reservoir, facing southeast



Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Photo 7

Picnic pad and restroom building, facing northeast



Photo 8

Park with walkway/obelisk/structures beyond, facing northeast



Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Photo 9
Obelisk, facing west



Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Photo 10
Reservoir/bandstand/pavilion/circular drive, facing west/northwest



Photo 11
Pavilion and bandstand, facing north



Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Photo 12
Bandstand, facing southeast



Photo 13
Pavilion and bandstand, facing east/northeast



Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Fannin, Goliad County, Texas

Photo 14
Caretaker House

